



PTILODES AURICOMIS: Swains.

J. Gould and H.C. Richter del. et lith.

C. Ballouandl. imp.

# PTILOTIS AURICOMIS.

## Yellow-tufted Honey-eater.

- Yellow-tufted Flycatcher*, Lath. Gen. Syn. Supp., vol. ii. p. 215.—Shaw, Gen. Zool., vol. viii. p. 172.  
*Certhia auriculata*, Shaw, Gen. Zool., vol. viii. p. 236.  
*Muscicapa mystacea*, Lath. Ind. Orn. Supp., p. li.?  
*Mustachoe Honey-eater*, Lath. Gen. Syn. Supp., vol. ii. p. 221?—Ib. Gen. Hist., vol. iv. p. 177?  
*Muscicapa auricomis*, Lath. Ind. Orn. Supp., p. xlix.—Steph. Cont. of Shaw's Gen. Zool., vol. x. p. 354.  
*L'Heorotaire à oreilles jaunes*, Vieill. Ois. dor., tom. ii. p. 123. pl. 85.  
*Tufted-eared Honey-eater*, Lath. Gen. Hist., vol. iv. p. 197.  
*Meliphaga auricomis*, Vig. and Horsf. in Linn. Trans., vol. xv. p. 313.—Swains. Zool. Ill., vol. i. pl. 43.
- 

By the list of synonyms given above, it will be seen that much doubt existed in the minds of the earlier writers on ornithology as to the place this bird should occupy in the natural system; the question was finally decided by Messrs. Vigors and Horsfield assigning it to its true station among the *Meliphagidæ*.

It is certainly one of the most beautiful as well as one of the oldest known species of the genus *Ptilotis*,—a genus, so far as is yet known, peculiar to Australia and New Guinea, the natural habitat of whose members is the evergreen *Eucalypti*, *Acaciæ*, &c.; and it is extremely interesting to observe how closely the plumage of the various groups of birds assimilates in colour to that of the flowers and leaves of the trees which they inhabit. I have often watched various species of this group among the leafy and flowering branches, busily engaged in gathering honey and insects, when the assimilation of the general tint of their plumage to the leaves, and their beautiful ornamental ear-coverts to the flowers, was very remarkable.

The Yellow-tufted Honey-eater is abundant in New South Wales, inhabiting at one season or other every portion of the country; the brushes near the coast, the flowering trees of the plains, and those of the sides and crowns of the highest hills towards the interior being alike tenanted by it. It is an active, animated species, flitting with a darting flight from tree to tree; threading the most thickly-leaved branches with a variety of sprightly actions; clinging beneath as well as traversing the upper side of the branch, for performing which its structure is beautifully adapted.

I never succeeded in finding the nest of this species, although, from its being very abundant on the Liverpool range at the period of the breeding-season, I can venture to state this to be one of the parts of the country in which it breeds, and that it evinces a decided partiality to mountain districts, and hence during great droughts suffers considerably from want of water; a fact I witnessed many times during my visit to the mountains during the great drought of 1839: all the gulleys and water-courses were then exhausted, and the natural beds of the rivers were as dry as the most arid plains; and the deep clefts and fissures in the rocks were the only resource for those animals of the forest to whom water was essential to their existence. To these natural basins this bird resorted in flocks of countless numbers, arriving in a famishing state, not only in the morning and evening but at all hours of the day, dashing down to drink quite regardless of my presence, although seated within two yards of them.

The female of this species, as is the case with others of the genus, is smaller than her mate, but exhibits no difference whatever in the colouring of her plumage.

Crown of the head olive-yellow; throat bright yellow; a black line commences at the base of the bill, surrounds the eye, and extends over the ear-coverts; behind the ear springs a lengthened tuft of rich yellow feathers; upper surface, wings and tail dark brown, with a tinge of olive; primaries and tail-feathers margined with olive-yellow; chest and under surface brownish yellow; bill black; irides reddish brown; feet blackish brown.

The Plate represents a male and a female on a branch of the *Tecoma Australis*, of the natural size.